

**REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING  
TOWN OF DARIEN, CONNECTICUT  
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of a Regular Meeting Held on May 3, 2006**

On May 3, 2006, a regular meeting of the RTM Public Works Committee was held in Room 119 of the Darien Town Hall with seven of eleven members present.<sup>1</sup> Present were:

Charles Andrew	Frank Kemp
David Bayne (Chairman)	Stephen Johnson
Mark Dailey (Vice-Chairman)	John Price
	Thomas Moore

Absent were Elsie Berl, John DeVita; Bruce Rae, and Brian Rayhill.

Also present were Robert Steeger, Director of Public Works, Darren Oustafine, Assistant Director of Public Works and Peter Hovell, Chairman of the Board of Finance.

The meeting was called to order at 7:50 p.m. and Chairman David Bayne volunteered and was unanimously elected to serve as Temporary Clerk for the meeting. Tom Moore volunteered to assist by taking additional notes of the meeting.

The Chairman announced that because of a deadline for state funding with respect to the creation of a proposed Health District, a special meeting of the RTM would be held on May 22. The proposed Callari lease and the cell phone tower lease extension will also be presented to the RTM that evening and a special meeting of the Committee to act on those leases would be held on May 15, 2006.

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<sup>1</sup> Former Committee Member L.J. Galvin resigned his seat from the RTM last week and was thanked by the Committee for his years of service to the RTM and to the Committee at its April 24 meeting when Mr. Galvin announced his intention to resign.

The Committee then unanimously approved the minutes of the April 24 Committee meeting.

The first agenda item was a review of the Department of Public Works (“DPW”) operating and capital budgets with the Committee’s guests to determine whether the committee would recommend approval of those budgets to the entire RTM at its May 8 meeting. Mr. Steeger first provided the Committee with a handout (copy attached) of a chart showing a substantial increase in service requests coming primarily from Town residents to the DPW. These requests range from pavement repair, to tree pruning, to catch basin cleanup, and well over half of them result in some action being taken by the DPW. As a result of the surge in requests, there is approximately a three month backlog for action on non-emergency requests.

Mr. Steeger also reported to the Committee that because the Town had switched from using sand to salt on Darien’s roads in the winter, the sweeping of the streets in Darien was completed by the DPW in the first week in April, which is the soonest that task has ever been completed.

Vice Chair Mark Daily then questioned Mr. Steeger about the cost of the Town’s spring cleanup. Mr. Steeger advised that in order to complete the cleanup in a timely fashion, he must dedicate his entire work force for approximately four weeks to the task. As a consequence about 96 full man days are dedicated to the cleanup at an approximate cost to the Town of \$20,000 before considering the cost of waste disposal of

the items collected by the DPW. Although never quantified, the entire cost of the cleanup could be as high as \$50,000 to \$60,000 to Darien. Mr. Steeger cautioned, however, that this is not an out-of-pocket cost because the DPW's workers are salaried employees and some of the material put out for spring cleanup would be taken to the dump by residents if the DPW did not pick it up. Mr. Steeger did point out, however, that there are lost opportunity costs and delays in the DPW completing its normal tasks caused by diverting his entire department work force from its regular work for a four week period each year.

There was also a discussion of how unsightly some areas of town become as a result of the pick-up with piles of trash left out on Town streets and particularly certain Town property abutting private roads for days. Mr. Hovell noted that when spring cleanup first began, it was limited to large, bulky items, and Mr. Steeger pointed that all manner of items, large and small, are now left out by town residents. The Committee also noted that there is the is a potential for lost tipping fees to the Town because some the material left out for the spring cleanup would otherwise probably be hauled away by commercial carters and brought over the scales at the dump. The suggestion was made by the Chairman that the Committee should consider turning its attention to the costs and benefits of spring cleanup after the budget season had concluded.

The Committee then turned to a page by page review of the DPW budgets with Messrs. Steeger, Oustafine and Hovell stopping on any line items about which the Committee had questions. Mr. Steeger noted that although there were no new programs

instituted this year, there are no major cuts either. He commented that the budget process had been very smooth and was well handled by all town officials. He further noted that the driving factor in the operating budget increases sought by the DPW this year were oil and fuel costs. Not only did increased oil costs impact the price of motor fuel paid by the DPW by about 50% over last year, but it also affected the costs of purchasing other materials used by DPW, such as road salt and asphalt due to increased transportation and manufacturing costs.

Significant budget items questioned by the Committee included the entry at page 107 of the Budget reflecting the transfer of \$200,000 from the Town's general funds to subsidize the Darien's solid waste costs. The discussion then turned to the \$1,138,337 payment for Darien's first installment of the payment for the upgrade of Stamford's waste treatment facilities where all of Darien's sewage is sent (Budget page 167). Mr. Steeger and Mr. Hovell explained that because this \$100 million project in Stamford includes more than just work on the waste treatment plant, Darien has commissioned an audit of the project to determine if the payment being sought by Stamford is in the correct amount. The audit should be completed prior to the due date of the payment.

The Committee then questioned Mr. Steeger about the \$1,519,565 payment for waste disposal services (Budget p.189, line 82013). Mr. Steeger explained that this is Darien's payment to the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority ("CRRA") for the delivery of Darien's solid waste to a plant in Bridgeport that burns the waste and converts

it to energy. Mr. Steeger reported to the Committee on the status of the negotiations for the CRRRA's contract renewal with the facility which is owned by a subsidiary of Waste Management Company. Although the contract negotiations will not be completed until June of next year, Mr. Steeger cautioned the Committee that Darien may have to pay substantially more for its solid waste disposal under the new agreement than it does now.

After a discussion of some other smaller budget items, the Committee then turned its attention to the capital budget (Budget p.175). There was a brief discussion of the fact that CL&P will haul away the sediment from the dredging of Town Hall pond in exchange for using a portion of the Town Hall parking lots as a staging area for materials used for the Glenbrook Cable Project. This will save the Town approximately \$100,000 on the project which is why the line item has decreased from \$185,000 to \$80,000.

Mr. Steeger then reviewed with the Committee the plans for the repair of the Gorham Pond tide gate, and Mr. Hovell explained that in approving the budget as presented, the RTM would also be approving the acceptance of a gift of \$100,000 from the Friends of Gorham Pond Dam which would be applied to the cost of the dam repair. The dam has been suffering from a significant amount of leakage for a number of years which is causing Gorham Pond to be substantially drained of water at each low tide cycle. The tide gate repair will stop this from happening and permit the pond to retain the salt water that floods it at each high tide. Mr. Price asked why Darien is obligated to spend this money to benefit the owners of properties surrounding Gorham Pond. Mr. Hovell and Mr. Steeger explained the

200 year leasing history of the dam pursuant to which the Town obtained the land on which the dam and Rings End Road sits in or about 1820. Pursuant to the last lease signed in 1920, which expires in 2020, the Town undertook the obligation to maintain the dam.

Mr. Steeger then reviewed the plans for the Heights Road drainage project, the cost of which Mr. Hovell advised would be bonded by the Town. The Heights Road is prone to flash flooding in heavy, fast rains and this project will drive a culvert under the railroad tracks at Heights Road to alleviate that problem. The Committee also reviewed the plans for moving the scale house and potentially adding a second scale to the dump. Mr. Hovell briefly explained an idea he has been working on to install an RFID “EZ Pass” type system at the dump at some date in the future to better track actual residential usage and to deter some of the abuses that have gone on there in the last few years.

Finally, Mr. Steeger also reviewed the planned improvements for the Center Street Parking lot, including DRI, Inc.’s plan to pay for some additional lighting, the repairs to the Town Hall Elevator and work planned for the Noroton Heights Train Station.

At the end of the discussion the Committee unanimously approved the resolution proposed by the Chairman to recommend that the DPW capital and operating budgets, as approved by the Board of Finance, be approved by the RTM. Mr. Kemp then expressed the thanks of the Committee to Messrs. Steeger, Oustafine and Hovell for taking the time to review the DPW budget in such detail with the Committee.

Due to the lateness of the hour, the Committee decided to defer discussion of the Callari lease and cell phone tower lease extension until its May 15 special meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David F. Bayne  
Chairman & Temporary Clerk  
RTM Public Works Committee

# Service Requests

